

Blaxhall Village Newsletter



Autumn 2021

Water Wonderland?



Our regular aerial snapper, Malcolm Pearce, took this great shot of Blaxhall's latest reservoir a few weeks ago, as it fast approaches completion, following hot on the heels of our first artificial lake, located south-west of Lime Tree farm. Whilst the earlier creation holds some 209,000m³ of water, the new bigger brother will contain some 330,000m³ when full. During construction the clay seam of blue lias boulder clay below the topsoil was excavated and stockpiled for re-use as engineering clay for lining the reservoir, while the sand was removed from below the clay and re-used in the outer embankments. The blue lias clay was then re-layed and compacted in order to achieve the impermeable clay layer. These huge excavations tend to resemble open wounds when new, but perhaps, with the promised landscaping and passage of time, nature will mitigate the initial effect, attracting water-loving flora and fauna to fashion a new, appealing environment. If any readers know of plans to introduce fish, we at the newsletter to be interested to hear about it, as, no doubt, will the local herons and anglers!

Christmas is Back!

Meanwhile, after taking a year off, Christmas is returning to Blaxhall this December, with our world-famous Christmas party taking place on December 11th (see pages 6 & 7 for details), and our ever-popular Carol Service on December 19th at 6.30pm. Also inside, news of further cuts to our postal service, the latest broadband developments, and updates from the PC and pub.

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Repairs Progress

In early December we will be having a full structural survey of the tower. The PCC has a long list of work identified by the architect during the 2018 Quinquennial Inspection and must rank these jobs in order to set a target for fundraising. The structural engineer will tell us exactly which tasks are critical to the integrity of the tower and then give us a prioritised list of the remainder - including those things which could be carried out by volunteers. A key objective is to be able to start ringing the bells again!

We will provide a summary of the report in future newsletters.



The church tower is some 700 years old

From the Rectory

It hardly seems possible that another year is coming to an end - and yet another eventful one at that! As I wander around the churchyard at Blaxhall I have wondered what all those past villagers would have made of our lives in the last couple of years. The place is so very lovely and peaceful and remains a still and calm oasis amongst all that happens in each of our lives. But, I guess, some of us have welcomed getting busy again and being able to meet old friends, call on people in their homes and, if you are like me, get a good dose of retail therapy. It has been so great to be able to return to something like normal life in our worship in church too. We are still taking care and plan to keep the church door open for every service until the spring in order to ensure fresh air regardless of how many choose to come to church. So be warned, if you are going to join us over the coming season, wear something very warm!

I very much hope that this Christmas is a time of hope and joy for you all and that you are able to spend time with those you love whilst feeling safe. One of the blessings of our rural life has been that during the worst of the pandemic we had the space to feel safer than those in big cities, and now, we are blessed with access to vaccines which will make such a difference to us all.

As you pass all those hundreds of Christmas trees growing in the fields around the village think of the family who will gather around each one over the coming season - and if you are the praying kind, offer a little prayer for them as I offer a prayer for each of you.

Rev Rachel



Parish Council

After many years of service to the village, Maggie Jennings has retired from both the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee, she was also editor of this newsletter, keeping it going when nobody else stepped up to the challenge. Maggie will be greatly missed, she has been one of the hardest working members of both committees, her enthusiasm, diligence and good humour will be very difficult to replace. Thank you so much Maggie, we wish you well in your future ventures.

This means we now have two vacancies on the Parish Council and reduces the Village Hall Committee to just a handful. If you would like to engage with the village on either of the committees please get in touch with me or Jo. It can be very rewarding and the village needs more people to engage and help.

Graham 688192

Village Hall & Playing Field

Covid has left us very frustrated, more things are affected than just day to day activities. The Village Hall Committee, as you know, have been applying for grants for new play equipment. We have had some success with a few smaller grants but larger amounts still elude us. All the larger grant giving bodies are swayed under with requests, making it difficult for us because we are not considered a worthy enough cause compared to the opposition. Our rejections seem to indicate that we are not always ticking the right boxes and although Jo, our clerk, has done a brilliant job we really need someone who is skilled at grant applications to finesse our bids. Is there anyone out there who could help?

We might have to revise our expectations of what we can achieve on the playing field. We would like the village to help us in moving forward. Please, let us know what your personal priorities are in the way of equipment and games. Involve your children and anyone you know who uses the playing field.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

What equipment would you like to see? Here are a few ideas but you may have other thoughts.

Swings...Roundabout...Climbing frame... Zip Wire...Boules...Outside Table Tennis...any other thoughts?

Please please get involved and Email your ideas to me at bolwesies@homail.com or drop a note through my door, Odds Cottage, School Road (next to the YHA). Please understand that not everyone's wishes will come true!

The Village Hall Christmas party is on the 11th December, live music, dancing, super Christmas supper and a licensed bar. Tickets will be limited to 60 people, at £15 for adults £7.50 for under 14's and are selling fast. Order quickly from Graham 688192 or Joy 688309. If you have already ordered your tickets please drop your money in as soon as you can. Thank you.

The Ship



Hello again from us all at The Blaxhall Ship.

Well, it certainly has been a busy and exciting Autumn. Pleased to report that the events we put on, were all well received and well attended. We are starting to fill our musical diary for next year and will publish this early 2022. Shortly afterwards our events calendar will be announced, a mixture of previous events and some new surprises.

Our focus now turns to Christmas, at time of writing we are sourcing a Christmas tree and starting to put the decorations up in and around the pub. Our Christmas menu will commence on 3rd December.

Our Christmas opening will be as follows;

Christmas Day	12.00 midday to 3pm (nibbles available)
Boxing Day	12.00 to 9pm (12.00 to 6 pm Food)

We are also proud to announce that Lynne and John Ward will be at The Ship to help us see the New Year in.

We find this is good time to both reflect on 2021 and then towards 2022.

Going forward we will be producing a list of ongoing events; we have seen an increase of attendees for our Traditional Monday afternoon session of Sing Say or Play. Also, the 3rd Wednesday of the month Traditional Folk Music evening has returned with numbers attending on the increase.

The ever popular and engaging Silmore will be performing from 4pm on Sunday 19th December.

Another date is the Blaxhall Sessions held at the Village Hall 3rd December 7.30pm, The Melrose Quartet, after performances of The Sessions, we usually have an impromptu musical set from some members of the audience and on occasions a short set from the performers.

During January we will be offering a 10% discount on combined food and drink bills that exceed £50.

Prior to closing from us all at The Ship, we wish you a very Merry Christmas (many visits to the pub) and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

To School, or Not to School?

School attendance is a subject we hear mentioned quite often these days, with parents being reproached for holidaying during term time, or allowing mildly ill children to stay at home, while schools are regularly castigated for suspending or expelling young troublemakers. Turning back the clock, however, reveals some rather different reasons for going, or not going, to school.



Some of Blaxhall School's 80+ pupils circa 1900

required at home for brewing". Another non-edible collectable in the village at the time were stones, which needed to be removed from fields, where they were a problem for crops, then used for tasks such as road repairs. At certain times during the year each family would be allocated a field and the children would have a day off school to go stone picking, earning a few precious pennies for the household.

As touched on above, an inevitable problem at a time when many families had 8, 10, or more children, was the challenge faced by women trying to cook, clean

In the 19th century, before the days of food banks, freezers or the welfare state, it was very necessary to maximise opportunities to stock the pantry whenever they arose, such as gleaning and jam-making, which often meant hard-pressed mothers calling on the children for help, since they were already up to their ears in sewing, cleaning and cooking. In Blaxhall, of course, we didn't limit such measures to provisioning food, as evidenced by an August 1871 entry in the school log which reads "great many absentees,



The school's junior class in 1907



Blaxhall School Junior Group in 1920

and sew for a dozen people, with no modern facilities, while attending to the needs and safety of 2 or 3 babies and toddlers. The solution was usually to delegate siblings, which often presented teachers with the choice of several older children either being regularly absent, or turning up at school complete with a baby brother/sister. It was also common for parents to enrol very young children, for the same reason, such as Blaxhall's Katie Ling, who was accepted aged just 3, whereupon she spent her time sat on a stool by the fire, too young to partake in the lessons.

BCOS - Stone Common Update and New Website

Many thanks to all those who attended the meeting at the village hall on Saturday 20th November. It was really encouraging to see such a full and enthusiastic turn-out

of people brimming with ideas about the land at Stone Common, recently gifted to the Blaxhall Commons and Open Spaces Trust by Mr Michael Prevost, Lord of the Manor.



The purpose of the meeting was to hear local people's ideas about future management, bearing in mind the Trust's charitable objectives, which include 'acquiring, owning, providing and maintaining land in Blaxhall, in particular common land, allotments or land over which local people and villagers have traditionally enjoyed access, for the benefit of residents and the wider public'. Ideas put forward were many and various, and were above all positive and supportive. Further details and the results of the

consultation can be seen on the Stone Common page of our new website, www.blaxhallcommons.com.

The Trust has limited financial and manpower resources, and any changes or improvements can only be taken forward incrementally, and with the support of local people. Volunteers will be needed to join work parties and to help with fundraising, as so successfully achieved on our other land at Jasper's Pightle. Our first project will be hedge planting along one of the boundaries, coordinated by Joy Shaw, Blaxhall Tree Warden and using funding allocated to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Volunteers will be needed to clear the existing brambles and scrub along the boundary and to plant out the new hedge; our friends and supporters will be hearing from us! Joy is also applying for funding for fruit trees and woodland saplings, in which we hope to involve young volunteers.

If you wish to help out as a volunteer and are not yet known to us, please get in touch with our Hon Secretary Eve Rossor at everrossor@gmail.com (tel. 688648).

Blaxhall Christmas Party

Sat 11th December

7.30pm till late

In The Village Hall

Dancing to John and Dave

Scrumptious Buffet

Licensed Bar

Tickets £15, Children under 14 £7.50, from Graham 01728 688192 or Joy 01728 688309

Blaxhall Christmas Party

After nearly two years of lockdowns and restrictions life is getting back to normal. It's been a long time since we have enjoyed, eating and dancing together. That all changes on Saturday 11th December when Blaxhall's Christmas party will be held in the Village Hall. Back, by popular demand, John & Dave aka the 'Rockaholics', guaranteed to get everyone dancing.

The evening starts at 7.30 with tickets priced at £15 for adults and £7.50 for under 14's which includes a sumptuous buffet Christmas supper and a licensed bar. Tickets available from Graham 688192 or Joy 688309. Tickets are selling fast so order early to avoid disappointment.

Bundles of Fun

Readers may recall that back in the summer we reported a growing body of evidence to suggest Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) broadband was coming to Stone Common and other properties on Rectory Road. We now have news of some further developments ...



In early November engineers reappeared, and strung new cables all the way along the road, from the point where the underground ducting ends, and again told those who enquired that it was bringing FTTP. The Better Broadband Suffolk website and Openreach DSL Checker both still showed no mention,

however, so the situation remained rather foggy. The result was a curiosity-inspired enquiry to the generally reticent Openreach, who were kind enough to respond just two days later, with the intelligence that we were indeed to be blessed with FTTP and it should be available to order by the end of December! Speeds, in theory, will range up to 1 gigabit per second, depending on your internet provider, which is more than 50x the current offering. It is also around 20x the average FTTC speed available to residents of Mill Common. As a Stone Common native myself, I would nonetheless like to assure readers that I won't be mentioning it very often in future newsletters, and certainly won't be childishly crowing about it at every opportunity.



The Royal Fail

We were disappointed to learn this week that the post box opposite the youth hostel is now only to be emptied once a day, at 9am weekdays and 7am on Saturdays, the 4.15pm weekday collection has been scrapped. This comes as a further slap in the face to the village, following the loss of the post box at the church crossroads in 2013, when the Royal Mail took the supremely cynical decision not to replace the original cast iron box after it was torn from its brick surround by metal thieves (below right).

Meanwhile, the company's profits soared to £702million in the year to March, with chief executive Stuart Simpson receiving £462,000 before bonuses. Simpson's predecessor, Rico Back, received a golden-hello of £6m when joining the company in 2018, followed by £480,000 cash and £9.8m in shares upon leaving 10 minutes later, so forgive me if I sound a little bitter when discussing their refusal to replace one village post box or empty the other one.





Parish Councillors

Graham Bowles	01728 688192 (Chairman)	Karen Baker	01728 688200
Shane Pictor	01728 688205	Ray Herring	01728 746337
Jonathan Cutting	01728 688003	Mark Oakley	01728 687507
Joanne Peters	01394 459400 (Parish Clerk)	Ken Anderson	01728 688316

Suffolk Coastal District Councillor - Ray Herring 07885 249218
ray.herring@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Suffolk County Councillor - Andrew Reid 07545 423799 andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk
Copies of minutes and agendas can be found at <http://blaxhall.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/>

Parish Council meetings are held in the Village Hall at 7.30 and are open to all parishioners, the public and press. The 2022 dates are: **Wednesday 12th January, Wednesday 2nd March, Wednesday 4th May, Wednesday 6th July, Wednesday 7th September and Wednesday 2nd November.**

Community Transport – “Connecting Communities” **01728 635938** The service booking line operates 08.45am to 4pm, Mon-Fri

Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust – www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org
For contact details of all trustees ring Mark Oakley 01728 687507

The **Mobile Library** comes to Blaxhall, and stops at **The Youth Hostel 9.35 – 10am** calling every 4 weeks on Wednesdays: the upcoming dates are **15 December, 12 January, 9 February, 9 March, 6 April, 4 May, 1 June, 29 June, 27 July, 24 August, 21 September**

Large print, Audio & Childrens' books, also CDs and DVDs are available for a small charge.
Contact Pete Wells or Helen Hudson on help@suffolklibraries.co.uk, visit the website <http://suffolkreads.onesuffolk.net/libraries-and-mobiles/> or phone **01473 584563**

To put something in the Village Noticeboard, please ring Graham Bowles 01728 688192
To put something in the Newsletter email to shane@blaxhall.com tel. 01728 688205

Allotment information contact Sophie Martin on 07724 356916,
Blaxhall.Allotments@gmail.com

Deadline for next Newsletter - 12th February